

One of the most perfect, if not the most perfect, examples of the domestic architecture of the district is the house of Eastington or Iseston, at no great distance from Nangle, and situated close to the shore of the bay of that name. In some early deeds it is spelt Estyngeston ; but its earlier form was Jestynton or Jestynstovvn, being so called after its founder, Jestyn, a grandson of Howell Dda. The original name was probably Tre-Jestyn, or, as the Anglo-Norman would call it, Jestyngton. There are numerous instances, in Pembrokeshire, of the same change from the Welsh to the English form. This building is not only one of the most perfect, but it is one which presents least difficulty as to its real date, which is that of the reign of Edward II, as fixed by Mr. J. H. Parker. The property came into the Perrot family by the marriage of Stephen, the first of the Pembrokeshire line, with one of the two coheiresses of Meirchion (ap Rhys), the great-grandson of Jestyn. The present structure, therefore, could not have been erected by this Stephen Perrot; nor is it certain that it occupies the site of the original house. The Perrots, however, resided here for many generations, although Fenton thinks that, after the acquisition of Haroldston by marriage, their principal residence was transferred to the more agreeable neighbourhood of Haverfordwest, near which Haroldston is situated.

But however this may be, it continued in the possession of the Perrots until the attainder of Sir John, the Lord Deputy. His grandson, Hugh, a younger son of Sir John Phillips of Pieton, was of this place, as appears from the Dale Castle Genealogies (p. 129), and from his tombstone, partly illegible, in Rhoscrowther church. During the close of the seventeenth, and nearly the whole of the eighteenth, century, it was the chief residence of the Meares family, from whom the estate was purchased, circa 1840, by Mr. Common Sergeant Mirehouse, the son of the purchaser of Nangle.

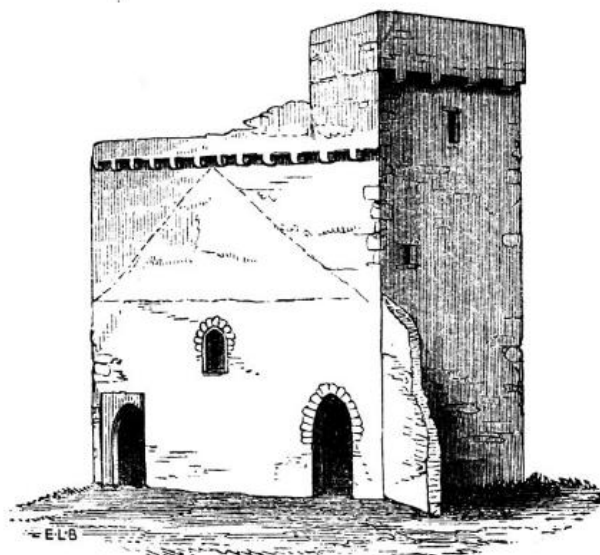
The building consists of the usual vaulted basements and the apartments above, consisting of two, namely, the great hall, reached by an external flight of steps ; and a smaller one adjoining it, for more private use. The hall was lit by a small Early English two-light window at each end; others probably also once existed in the other parts of the building, but have since been replaced by square ones of a later date. A small newel-staircase leads to the little tower on the roof, whence a wide prospect towards the haven can be had. This might also serve as an additional defence to the angle between the two parts of the building, shewn in the accompanying illustration. (Cut No. 7.) The present flight of stone steps is not the original one. The vaulted basements are not provided with means of warming, as is so frequently the case. They are, however, more lofty and spacious than usual in the district, and may have been intended for occupation, not merely as a repository for stores. The present lights in them are not original.

The modern house of the Meares, recently removed, abutted on the western wall of the main building, and a farmhouse stands at present on the other side ; so that, as might be expected under the circumstances, no remains of external offices or defensive walls can be made out. There is, however, no doubt that in the present building we have substantially a complete residence of the early part of the fourteenth century, and that it is not a remnant of a more extensive structure, as Fenton states.

In the parish of St. Issel, about four miles from Tenby, is a building which, like that last noticed, approaches the castle rather than a domestic edifice. It takes its name of Bonvil Court from one De Bonville,¹ its Anglo- Norman possessor ; the date, however, of whose arrival in these parts is uncertain. If he was among the first settlers, the present building could not have been erected by him, as it must be assigned to the Edwardian time. As, however, there is another place of the same name, although in a slightly different form, near Cowbridge in Glamorganshire, called Bonvilston, or Boulston, the Pembrokeshire De Bonville may be an offshoot of the Glamorganshire family, and have come into the possession of Bonville Court at a later date. Now, according to Fenton, Nicholas De Bonville was returned as possessing lands in Coedtraeth, within which Bonville Court stands, in the time of Edward II. He may, perhaps, therefore, have been the builder. Allusion has been already made to the contrast of ancient and modern Pembrokeshire as regards its woods. Coedtraeth is an example, where the only evidence of its former woods and forests is to be found in the first syllable of that name.

Cut No. 8 represents the front of the house, which, like that of the square tower at Nangle, is provided with internal communication by a newel stair placed in an angle of the higher tower. The entrance on the right hand leads to the interior of the larger basement, and to the stairs which conduct to the upper chambers and the exterior of the roof. At the opposite end of the building is another entrance, which merely opens into a very narrow vaulted room, or rather a wide passage, which was evidently intended for stores only. Over it and the adjoining basement is the large upper chamber, which is vaulted in the same manner as the basements. original windows were doubtlessly better adapted for defensive purposes than the present one. 1

As you enter there is a large fireplace on the right hand, and beyond it a window; which, however, is a later insertion, like that beneath, which lights the basement. (See cut No. 9.) The

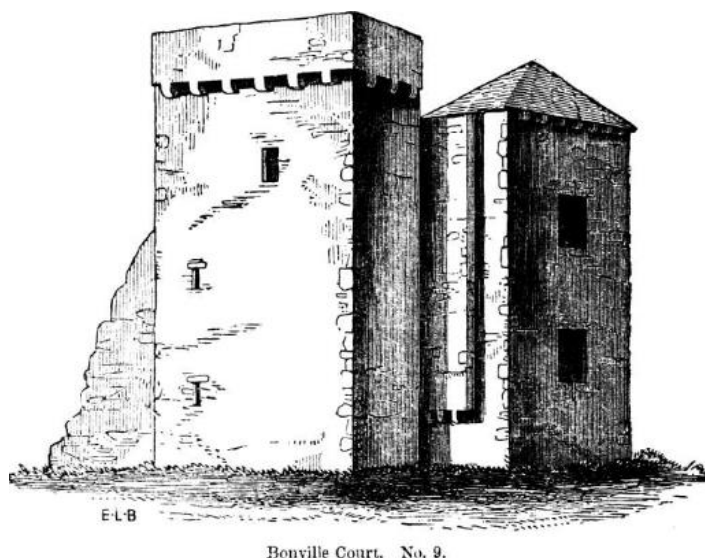


Bonville Court. No. 8.

In the middle of the building is an opening, the sill of which is level with the floor of the upper chamber. The use of this opening appears to have been the same as the one at Nangle, namely the hoisting up bulky articles, such as could not be easily conveyed up the stairs. There are no traces of any supporting corbels which might have supported a small projecting gallery such as might have commanded the entrances below on each side.

At some period an additional building has been reared against the front, but has long since been destroyed. The fragment of a wall still remaining may have been connected with this addition, and which may have been made when the windows in the principal chamber were inserted, and the mansion in general been adapted for more modern requisitions.

Originally there were parapets all round the building ; and, as the rooms below the roof are stone-vaulted, there was good footing for defensive purposes. There appears also to have been a square court which enclosed



the building, one side of which seems to correspond with the present low garden wall in front. The whole building is far inferior in size and importance to those of Eastington and Nangle, but is nevertheless a valuable example of domestic buildings at a period when the country was still unsettled, and the security of such property depended more on the strength of the building and occupants than parchment deeds. Of its history little is known, except that a Welsh family of good descent came into possession at an early period. The first, who assumed the surname of Jones, married an Elliot of Amroth, a place not far distant. His son William married a daughter of Walter Philpin, of Tenby, a neighbour on the other side, and whose mother was Jane, sole heir of Thomas Perrot, of Scotsborough ; and, as in the time of L. Dwnn, the owner of Bonville quartered Perrot, this coat may have been thus assumed.

It is in a very neglected condition, and appears to be an appurtenance common to some cottages at its foot, and which are occupied by coal-miners. The walls, however, are in tolerably sound condition. For the present the Domestic Architecture of South Pembrokeshire may be considered sufficiently illustrated ; but, as there are probably many other remains of the same varied character and importance, it is to be hoped that this imperfect notice given in the Journal of the Association may induce members who reside in that part of the country to turn their attention to the subject, and communicate the result of their investigations. But another, and perhaps more desirable, object will be attained if the owners of such houses can be induced to place a proper value on them, and preserve as far as possible such memorials of their predecessors as are worthy of preservation, not only from their individual character, but as furnishing a safe and clear insight into the manner of life in a district so peculiarly situated as was the southern portion of Pembrokeshire.

E. L. Barnwell.

1 As many of the Anglo-Norman settlers in South Wales came from the opposite shores, it is, as suggested by Mr. G. T. Clark, probable that the De Bonvilles of Glamorganshire are connected with the families of that name in Devon and Somersetshire. 3kd ser., vol. xiv. 6.

Some Stone and Half-Timbered Houses

Reference has been made to the use of stone in various parts of Wales for building purposes. It is beyond the scope of the present work, however, to deal with all stone-built houses throughout Wales. Such a study would involve a parish-by-parish survey of great length and detail which can only be accomplished in future years and would involve issues wider than those with which we are at present concerned, e.g. a treatment of manor houses, castles, etc.-in short, a sophisticated tradition other than the 'unconscious artistry' of the folk-builder. On the other hand, the folk-builder has used stone as his medium, when there is a plentiful supply, to produce long-houses and cottages whose lay-outs do not differ in any fundamental way from those built of mud or other materials. This aspect of the subject is dealt with in Chapter VIII. In Pembrokeshire, however, a type of stone house has been evolved which is so individual and so different from houses in other parts of Wales that it deserves separate treatment here. Pembrokeshire has a large number of houses of a well-built and sturdy character. 'No district of the Principality', writes Barnwell¹ of south Pembrokeshire, 'is richer in castles, churches or houses.' He lists the castles of Haverfordwest, Picton, Wiston and Narberth, the 'episcopal castle' of Llaw-haden and the commandery of Slebech, and proceeds to enumerate Wolf's Castle, Roche Castle, and the castles of Amroth, Tenby, Manorbier, Castle Martin, Walwyn's Castle, Benton, Upton and Carew with the great fortress of Pembroke over all. 'So completely fortified was the whole district that even the churches with their vaulted roofs and lofty towers seem to have been adapted for defence.¹ The large country houses-Eastington, Bonville Court, etc.-showed the same strength of structure and many of the structural characteristics of the castle-buildings.

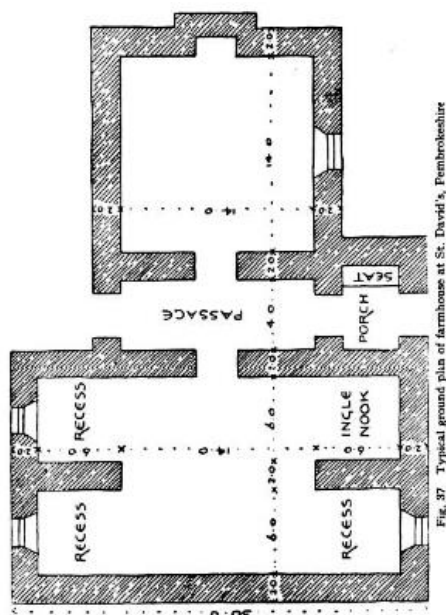


Fig. 37 Typical ground plan of farmhouse at St. David's, Pembrokeshire

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PEMBROKESHIRE HOUSES.

In no district of Wales exist more numerous, and in many respects more interesting, examples of domestic architecture than in the southern parts of Pembrokeshire. For this peculiarity more reasons than one may be suggested. The character and abundance of the stone, the excellence of the lime, and the fact that the builders were exposed to sudden and numerous attacks from their neighbours, who would naturally give as much annoyance as they could to the strangers who had taken possession of the fairest portions of their land, would have considerable influence in determining the character of their houses. Security against sudden attack would be their first object; and although no such ordinary dwellings could withstand a formal blockade, like a more regular fortress, yet it was not difficult to make them secure enough so as to hold out until aid could be obtained from the nearest castle. How thickly these are scattered over this part of

Pembrokeshire is well known, so that it may be assumed that relief was always to be had from no great distance.

Additional security was furnished also by the numerous semi- fortified churches with their lofty towers, which could provide a temporary refuge: hence the constant use of stone vaults for the lower portions of buildings, which would prevent the occupants of the upper part from being burnt out. In some instances a movable ladder was the only means of communication, as, for example, in the curious church of Manorbier. In this instance the proximity of the Castle might be thought to have made this precaution less necessary than in other and less favoured districts.

These motives would induce settlers in a disturbed district to provide as far as they could for their safety : hence we find in this locality so many houses provided with stone-vaulted roofs and ceilings. Some, however, of these may, perhaps, be classed among the smaller castles not unlike the Pele castles of the north, or those common in some parts of Ireland. Such, for instance, is Bonville Court, near Tenby, described in the *Archceologia Cambrensis* for 1868, as also the more important house of Eastington or Estington (Iestyn's town), south-west of Pembroke, assigned by Mr. Parker to the time of Edward II. An earlier house probably existed on this spot, as the estate came by marriage with a coheirress of Meirchion ap Rhys into the Perrot family long before the time of Edward. In both these houses these stone vaults are found in all the rooms. Bonville Court is now degraded as a depository of rubbish. Eastington is occupied by a farmer.

Description

A small ruined manor-house of the peel tower type, probably of 15th-century date, standing about 500 yards north-west of the parish church, illustrated and described in detail in *Arch. Camb.* for 1868 (III, xiv, 79). Although its main features are easily followed, the intervening 60 years have obliterated much. The building, which is now used for farm purposes, has a plain vaulted undercroft, with two apartments above to which access is gained by an exterior flight of steps. From the larger of the two rooms a short newel stairway leads to the summit of a low lantern or beacon tower. Around the roof runs a corbel table and parapet. The windows have been modernised. Certain " geometrical patterns," which are said to have been in the concrete or plaster floor (*Journal, British Archaeological Assoc.*, xli, 82), have disappeared since 1885. The building should be compared with Carswell (No. 846) in the parish of Penally. (RCAHMMW, 1925)

15th century, probably. Small ruined house. Peel type. 2 storey. Battlemented. Vaulted undercroft. Short newel stair. The site of ornamental gardens, or a park is indicated by a ha-ha, with remains of a gateway across it to the S of the house. A tower house of rubble stone. Vaulted ground floor and first floor hall reached by added W side outside stairs. Narrower and possibly later rear wing. C20 roofs and some minor repairs to stonework but for the most part unrestored. (Coflein)

Situated some 0.75 km NW of Rhoscrowther Church and close to Texaco Oil Refinery. Medieval tower house of C14 to early C15 date. Tower house: Rubble stone, embattled, with vaulted ground floor and first-floor hall reached by added W side outside stairs. A narrower, possibly slightly later, rear wing has vaulted room on each floor and an embattled turret which crowns the stair in the re-entrant NW angle, leading from first floor to the wall walk behind the battlements. S front has corbelled embattled parapet, one first-floor later window and ground-floor (later) broad opening. Shallow angle buttresses. C20 lightweight roofs, and some repairs to stonework, otherwise unrestored. Marks of a lost SW gabled building, possibly indicating an earlier hall range. The original entry to the tower was from the W where a pointed arched doorway survives between the gable and the outside stairs. The stairs may have been originally in timber with an upper porch for which sockets remain. One blocked narrow lancet to first floor left and one blocked N end 2-light trefoil-headed opening part-blocked by rear wing. History: C15 house belonged to Perrot family. William Meares of Eastington (d 1768) is commemorated in the church and there is said to have been a large house of the Meare family adjoining the Tower. This house was occupied by the Leach family in later C18 but mostly demolished by 1868, of which the present house may be the outbuildings. (Listed Building Description)

Salter writes C13 semi fortified solar block of manor house. King writes long low tower, probably C15. Davis write C14. May have formed part of a large structure.